

194 is the main characteristic of the Georgian's accent when speaking Russian. As further phonetic characteristics must be mentioned the ubiquitous presence of two series of k-sounds (one velar, as in English, and one unvular) with fricatives corresponding to one or both (as in German ich and ach). Some of the N. Caucasian languages (Circassian, Avar, etc.) have various types of lateral fricatives (cf. the Welsh ll); their richness in consonants is further due to the occurrence of series of emphatic, palatalized and labialized consonants in addition to the neutral ones.

193 In morphology and syntax, the three groups of Caucasian languages show considerable divergences. The N.E. languages have a rich declension (e.g., Avar has 19 cases, and Lak has as many as 40) and a simple conjugation (in most of them the very does not express person). The N.W. languages, on the other hand, have the exact opposite: their declension is poor (Circassian has 4 cases and Abkhaz, 3) but their conjugation is extremely complicated, the verb expressing the person of subject, direct and indirect object and even prepositional object ("with you," "for me," etc.). In this respect the S. Caucasian languages are in an intermediate position, nominal and verbal inflection being neither as complex nor as simple as the extremes found in the North. In most of the N.E.

- /93 languages morphology and syntax are dominated by the division of all nouns into a number of classes (rational, subdivided into male and female, and several non-rational genders); these classes are referred to by indicators in adjectives and verbs, in the latter for both subject and object. Outside the N. E. languages, only Abkhaz has a simple and probably secondarily developed system of classes (rational male and female, and irrational). All the Caucasian languages have one peculiarity in common which is variously referred to as "passive character of the transitive verb," "ergative structure," etc.: morphologically and syntactically the object of the transitive verb is treated in the same way as the subject of the intransitive verb (the sentences "He is standing." and "I advise him." being approximately expressed as "He is a standee." and "He is my advisee.>"). As to morphological technique, the Caucasian languages all employ both prefixes and suffixes. The N. W. languages are the most purely agglutinative (i. e., they string the significant elements, each with its own separate meaning and without much unpredictable variation, into words). The S. and especially the N. E. languages, although likewise of the agglutinative type, also exhibit symbolic change (as in "man" - "men" or "write" - "wrote") and suppletion (as in "go" - "went").

Diphthongs occur very seldom in the Caucasian languages, the strongest tendency to form such being in Chechen. 194

On the other hand, the poverty of the vocalic system is amply compensated for by the richness of the consonantal systems of the three groups, a fact especially true in regard to the languages belonging to the Northwestern branch. The Abkhazian language, which, as we have seen, has only two basic vowels, has as many as 70 different consonants.

The aspirated tenues *p' t' k'* occur in all three branches. Similarly, in all three groups we find glottocclusive tenues and affricates *p' t' k' (ts')* *t'*. Lateral consonants (*l°, r°, t°, k°*) are represented in all three groups: in the Northwestern by the Ubykhian and Kabardian languages, in the Northeastern by the Avaro-Andi sub-group, and in the Southern by the Tushian language. There are, besides these, many other interesting and unusual consonants. To mention but a few, we find in the Caucasian languages, for example, the so-called Polish *l* or English *w*; then, there are interesting palatals, dorsals, labialized *ž* (something between *ž* and *z*, or less correctly what Dirr terms the "whistling sound" of *žžv*), reduced consonants, emphatic consonants. These are but a few examples showing the richness of the consonantal system of the Caucasian languages.¹⁸

2. The Class System

Words are divided not so much according to gender as to class, a phenomenon found in all three linguistic groups. In the Northwestern group we find the classes in Abkhazian, not however in Ubykhian or in Kabardian. The Abkhaz distinguish between rational and non-rational beings. The class system is most fully developed in the Northeastern group. Generally speaking, one class includes all rational beings male and female after puberty; whereas, one to four classes generally embrace all other beings. The language of the Bats (Chechen tribe in Tushetia)¹⁹ and the Ingushi distinguish six classes; the Dargwa, Andi, Lak, Rutulian, Archi, Tsakhur languages have four classes in all; the Avaro-Andi sub-group has three; Tabassaranians distinguish between persons and things, while the Kurins, Aghulians and Udins no longer have the class system. In South Caucasia the system is either non-existent or is still in its initial stage of development.²⁰ 193 ●

3. Numerals

The numerals of all Caucasian languages are based on the vigesimal system.²¹ 802

4. Verbs

The Caucasian languages are distinguished for their extremely complicated verbal forms. In the Northwestern languages complete phrases and subordinate 193

¹⁸ A. Dirr, *l. c.*

¹⁹ A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 29—34. See also N. Trubetzkoy, "Die Konsonantensysteme der ostkaukasischen Sprachen," *Caucasica*, VIII.

²⁰ Dirr, less correctly, says eight classes are distinguishable in Bats.

²¹ A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 342 f.

²² A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 358—361.

193 sentences may be incorporated into the verbal form. Adverbial relations, temporal designations, direction, mood, and many other determinations are expressed by the verb form itself. To complicate matters, sometimes the original verb itself consists of only one consonant, which is lost in the numerous additions just mentioned and many others besides—infixes and suffixes that denote place, negation, question, relationship; even substantives may be attached to the verb. The Northeastern languages distinguish between momentative, durative, iterative, and inchoative forms.²² Verbal forms become exceedingly complicated in languages that not only distinguish between different classes of beings but also have the use of person, as is the case in the Dargwa language.

5. Declension

In the Northwestern languages the declension is extremely simple. (A declension is almost superfluous, for, as we have mentioned above, the verb is capable of incorporating all possible relationships.) Similarly, the declensions of the South Caucasian languages are simple. The Northeastern languages, however, possess a complicated declension. The instrumental is the most important case, the genitive and dative being derived from the instrumental. The agent is placed in the instrumental while the aim of the action is in the nominative.²³ The locative is also an important case: by means of suffixes a large number of adverbial relations can be expressed, e. g., *upward, toward, upon, against, over, into, etc.*

6. Linguistic Relationships

197 Our first question is: Do the three Caucasian groups of languages constitute
114 a distinct linguistic family, as do, for example, the Indo-European languages? Despite the similarities between the groups and despite the fact that Abkhazian seems to form a bridge between the Southern as well as the Northeastern languages,²⁴ sufficient evidence has not yet been brought forth to justify anyone in speaking of a common "Caucasian Family." As far as our present knowledge of the Caucasian languages goes, it is much more probable that there are three (or perhaps two, Northern and Southern) distinct families.

The affinity of the languages of Caucasia with other languages has been a favourite question among the Caucasologists, formerly much more than in

²² R. Bleichsteiner, "Die kaukasische Sprachgruppe," *Anthropos*, XXXII (1937), pp. 66, 68. G. Deeters, *Das khartvelische Verbum*, Leipzig, 1930.

²³ The ergative is used in the other groups too. Cf. C. Tagliavini, "Osservazioni sull'ergativo georgiano," *Mélanges de linguistique et de philologie offerts à Jacq. Van Ginneken, à l'occasion du sixantième anniversaire de sa naissance*, pp. 187—193.

²⁴ R. Bleichsteiner, *op. cit.*, p. 72. Today there is absolutely no doubt about Professor Bleichsteiner's opposition to a single "Caucasian Family" of languages: "Die drei eigentlichen kaukasischen Sprachgruppen sind weder untereinander noch mit anderen Sprachfamilien Eurasiens verwandt." ("Die Völker des Kaukasus," *Asien-Berichte*, V (1944), No. 22, p. 15.)